City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

Citation: Davies, D. (2019). Braided geographies: bordered forms and cross-border formations in refugee comics. Journal for Cultural Research, doi: 10.1080/14797585.2019.1665892

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/22862/

Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1080/14797585.2019.1665892

Copyright: City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

Reuse: Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@city.ac.uk

Braided Geographies: Bordered Forms & Cross-Border Formations in Refugee Comics

Dominic Davies

English Department, City, University of London, London, United Kingdom

Contact Details: Lecturer in English, Department of English, City, University of London, Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0HB

Email: drdomdavies@gmail.com; dominic.davies@city.ac.uk

Biographical note:

Dominic Davies is a Lecturer in English at City, University of London. He holds a DPhil and British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship from the University of Oxford, and facilitated during that time the Leverhulme-funded Network, 'Planned Violence: Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructure & Literature' (2014-2016) and the British Council US-funded Network, 'Divided Cities: Culture, Infrastructure & the Urban Future' (2016-2018). He is the author of *Imperial Infrastructure and Spatial Resistance in Colonial Literature, 1880-1930* (Peter Lang, 2017) and *Urban Comics: Infrastructure & the Global City in Contemporary Graphic Narratives* (Routledge, 2019), along with a number of journal articles and book chapters exploring colonial and postcolonial literature, history and culture. He is also the co-editor of *Fighting Words: Fifteen Books that Shaped the Postcolonial World* (Peter Lang, 2017), *Planned Violence: Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructure, Literature & Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), and *Documenting Trauma in Comics: Traumatic Pasts, Embodied Histories & Graphic Reportage* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

Braided Geographies: Bordered Forms & Cross-Border Formations in Refugee Comics

Abstract

This article offers a close analysis of a trilogy of 'refugee comics' entitled 'A Perilous Journey', which were produced in 2015 by the non-profit organisation PositiveNegatives, to conceive of comics as a bordered form able to establish alternative cross-border formations, or 'counter-geographies', as it calls them. Drawing on the work of Martina Tazzioloi, Thierry Groensteen, Jason Dittmer, Michael Rothberg and others, the article argues that it is by building braided, multi-directional relationships between different geographic spaces, both past and present, that refugee comics realise a set of counter-geographic and potentially decolonising imaginaries. Through their spatial form, refugee comics disassemble geographic space to reveal counter-geographies of multiple synchronic *and* diachronic relations and coformations, as these occur between different regions and locations, and as they accumulate through complex aggregations of traumatic and other affective memories. The article contends that we need an interdisciplinary combination of the critical reading skills of humanities scholars *and* the rigorous anthropological, sociological and theoretical work of the social sciences to make sense of the visualisation of these counter-geographic movements in comics. It concludes by showing how the counter-geographies visualised by refugee comics can subvert the geopolitical landscape of discrete nation-states and their territorially bound imagined communities.

Keywords: refugee comics, counter-geographies, braiding, decolonise, imagined communities

Introduction: PostiveNegatives

In 2009, the 26-year-long civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the insurgent military group, the Tamil Tigers, came to a violent end. A year earlier, in 2008, as the Sri Lankan military embarked on their final push northwards, Benjamin Dix – a UN worker with a background in photojournalism – found himself caught in a bunker as an aggressive munitions bombardment rained down outside. Unable to leave, he read the two books that lay to hand: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980-1991) and Joe Sacco's *Palestine* (1993-1995), two now canonical comics that both have refugee characters – not to mention accounts of the violence and displacement that refugee's experience – at their centre. Dix was eventually evacuated out of the country in the very last UN convoy, as the international community abandoned Sri Lankan Tamils to what has since been described, by some, as a forgotten genocide (Aiken and Rudhramoorthy, 2019). Returning to London with PTSD, Dix remained haunted by the racialised privilege of his national citizenship that allowed for his evacuation, not to mention the many Sri Lankan civilians that died in the final months of the war. As he has commented: 'It's the white guys who get in the armoured trucks and drive out wearing bullet-proof vests' (O'Connor, 2015). Inspired by his reading of Spiegelman and Sacco in the UN bunker, he resolved to continue their work, establishing in 2012 the non-profit organisation 'PostiveNegatives' with the explicit aim of documenting and communicating refugee narratives in the comics form. Now 'the custodian of some of the darkest stories in the world' (O'Connor, 2015), the organisation's name, PositiveNegatives, gestures to its underlying effort to 'invert' – that is, to show the 'photo negative' of – the dominant regimes of 'visuality' that organise and separate the surface of the planet into discrete, bordered nation-states (Mirzoeff, 2011) .

This article focuses on a trilogy of 'refugee comics', collectively entitled 'A Perilous Journey', that were produced by PositiveNegatives in 2015, to show how their 'countervisual' and 'decolonising' potential is realised specifically through the 'countergeographies' – or 'braided geographies', as I call them – that are made possible by the comics form. The comics of which 'A Perilous Journey' is comprised garnered significant media attention on their initial publication. They were serialised in the UK newspaper *The Guardian* and Norway's *Aftenposten*, and exhibited at the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo that same year. More recently in the summer of 2017, a selection of these comics were exhibited in the Brunei Gallery in the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) in London, where PositiveNegatives are themselves based. The timing of the comics' initial release was significant: 2014 recorded 'the largest total displaced people in recorded history (59.5 million)', and in 2015 European media coverage of this 'crisis' reached its hysterical apogee (Jones, 2016, p.18). The publication of these refugee comics in 2015 thus allowed them to intervene into a fraught public sphere where political rhetoric frequently deploys a militaristic language of 'crisis' and media representation tends toward racist images of 'invasions' and 'swarms' (Abderrezak, 2016: p.x). Widely celebrated by scholars from across the disciplines for their subversion of these dominant representations of refugees, the comics have continued to circulate in a wide range of different forums, and they are still available to view on the organisation's website – positivenegatives.org – where a number of other more recent comics projects documenting other refugee narratives can also be found.

PositiveNegatives self-defined remit is to 'combine ethnographic research with illustration, adapting personal testimonies into art, advocacy and education materials' (PositiveNegatives, 'About', n.d.). As Kathy Burrell and Katharina Hörschelmann observe, the organisation 'is explicitly activist and progressive. Much of its efforts are geared towards education, engaging young people especially in conversations about important social issues' (2019, p.51). PositiveNegatives are upfront about their methodology, which involves the adaptation of refugee narratives from firsthand interviews with refugees themselves. Illustrations, which in the case of 'A Perilous Journey' are drawn by London-based artist Lindsay Pollack, are based on photographs taken during field research where possible. Significantly, geographic spaces difficult or impossible to photograph, such as the inside of a Syrian torture chamber or a boat crossing the Mediterranean, are imaginatively reconstructed from refugees' testimonies. Where possible, early drafts of the comics are returned to refugees before their final inking to ensure their accounts have been accurately represented (PositiveNegatives, 'Methodology', n.d.).

The three comics of which 'A Perilous Journey' is comprised each focus on the story of a male, Syrian refugee, and are respectively named after these men: 'Hasko', 'Khalid' and 'Mohammad'. In each case, the

refugee protagonists have arrived in Europe, though at the time of their completion they had not all yet been granted asylum. From this position of spatial indeterminacy – an 'open-endedness' that, as Burrell and Hörschelmann point out, 'reflects the indeterminacy of many refugee journeys' (p.52) – the narratives circle back to explore the original causes of displacement, the geographic route taken between Syria and Europe, and the recurring traumatic memories of their refugee protagonists. It is this entangled temporal movement, and the attendant spatial complexities of refugee narratives, that makes the comics form especially adept at visualising what I will theorise throughout this article as the braided geographies of refugee narratives.

In the first half of this article, I set up this concept of braided geographies by tracing the counter-geographic movements of refugee journeys and then connecting these to the formal concept of narrative 'braiding' that is so central to the comics form. Then in its second half, I offer close readings of the three comics of which 'A Perilous Journey' is comprised. Through this combination of contextual and close textual analyses, the article makes three core arguments. The first of these is that the comics form, which is comprised of multiple juxtaposed panels braided together spatially on the page, is especially adept at visualising the 'counter-geographic' coformations of refugee narratives as they extend beyond, between and around national borders. The second is that because comics represent time *as* space (McCloud, 1993: 7), they are able to reveal these braided geographies to be constructed through different moments in time as well as across geographic spaces. Comics not only show us how refugees and migrants imagine and inhabit global geographic space through relations that disregard national borders. They also visualise the way in which these braided geographies are reliant on the resurfacing of *memories* of different past, often traumatic experiences, in the space of the geographic *and* temporal present. Third and finally, the article argues that, in visualising these braided geographies as they are felt and experienced by refugees, these comics demand that readers too imagine geographic space from a decolonial perspective, one that disassembles the global border regime and its violent delineation of 'legal citizens' from 'illegal aliens'. In its conclusion, the article combines these three arguments to contend that refugee comics initiate the kinds of 'border thinking' that a specifically interdisciplinary, *decolonial* praxis both requires and implies.

Counter-Geographies

In Europe, as in other parts of the world, resurgent nationalisms and their corresponding xenophobias insist on consolidating their social and cultural identities along the limited geography of a 'bounded territorial space'; that is, a fixed national territory contained by political borders (Anderson, 2006). In so doing, they

seek to erase the far more complex social, cultural and imagined 'coformations' – a term preferred by spatial theorist Doreen Massey to 'co-existence' or 'connection' for the stress it places on the relational qualities of space (2005, p.147) – that cannot be contained neatly *within* the demarcated space of the nation. The frantic expansion of border fortifications in the twenty-first century exploits complex desires and unaddressed anxieties by making performative gestures toward supposed sovereignty and security (Jones et al., 2017, pp. 38-39). Physical border fortifications are drawn by 'the pull of identity' (Vallet, 2014, p.2), policing the spatial limits of nationalist and cultural geographies (Ahmed, 2004, p.1; Davies, 2017), smoothing over their internal 'fault lines' (Fekete, 2018), and providing a site for the 'the enactment and disputation of the very idea of "Europe"' (De Genova, 2017, p.23). Disrupted by the free-flowing 'liquid modernity' of globalised capital (Bauman, 2000), nationalist imaginaries search for spatial stability in the solid concrete of border walls and the meticulous identification and externalisation of the 'non-citizen', or 'stranger' (Bauman, 2016; see also Agier, 2016, p.16). Such processes highlight the extent to which national geographies are not neutral or natural, but rather socially imagined and spatially constructed through continually evolving histories of colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial violence (Said, 2003; Gregory, 2004) – histories that are in turn supported by dominant regimes of visuality (Mirzoeff, 2011).

The figure of the migrant, who is embedded in a range of cross-national cultural practices, social memories, and imagined communities, reveals the geographic fiction of the nation-state – they perform what Massey might describe as 'a politics of the negotiation of relations' (2005, p.147). Of course, the *physical* space of national and supra-national territories are, in the case of Europe at least, obsessively demarcated and defined. However, from the various anxieties yielded by the 2015 refugee 'crisis' to the performative reclamation of national sovereignty as epitomised in the Brexit referendum, it is clear that the infrastructural demarcation of physical space is both produced *and* challenged by more complex social and cultural geographies. While 'hard' immigration systems violently regulate space, they also produce 'a certain way of being that's other to the system', a set of imagined communities and spatial relations that cut across and around borders (King, 2016, p.7). We can read the infrastructural walling of national borders as an expression of 'waning' state sovereignty (Brown, 2010, pp.24-25), or conversely as a violent reassertion of state power (Jones, 2016, pp.67-68). But in either case, the figure of the migrant – and more particularly, the refugee – reveals the nation-state system, as it is spatially and politically conceived, to be a violent

simplification of a far more uneven and complex constellation of what we might call 'counter-geographies', as these are imagined and inhabited by *both* refugees and host communities.[1]

For Martina Tazzioli, the term counter-geographies 'refers to an analytical move which engages with the limits of (political) representation at stake in the attempt to "map" the spatial turbulence generated by migrants' unexpected presence' (2015, p.3). As she continues, such a critical perspective draws attention to the '*spatial disarray* enacted by migrants', not to subject these migrants to a renewed and more sophisticated surveillance regime, but to challenge that regime itself (pp.3-4). This article argues that the braided forms of refugee and migrant comics are particularly adept at visualising these kaleidoscopic counter-geographies. More than this, the counter-geographies visualised by refugee comics contain radical political assemblages that reveal 'the geopolitical map of Europe' to be 'an untenable illustrative device' (Tazzioli, 2015, p.4). Much important anthropological, sociological and journalistic work has thoroughly excavated such complex topologies (King, 2016; Kingsley, 2017; Trilling, 2018), and comics cannot claim a representational monopoly on this important political work. But it is the fundamentally spatial make-up of their anti-linear form that allows them to reveal the geographic braids of refugee narratives that extend across and between the borders of national and supra-national states, and in so doing to invite their readers to participate in the construction of sophisticated counter-geographies and alternative, cross-national imagined communities.

Comics

Since the publication of PositiveNegative's 'A Perilous Journey', comics that depict refugee and migrant narratives have boomed into the now distinct and recognisable genre of 'refugee comics' (Rifkind, 2017). Offering what Nina Mickwitz has described as a kind of 'graphic truth-telling in a skeptical age' (2016, pp. 159-160), refugee comics range from single-panel infographics (Kugler, 2016) to multi-panel webcomics (PositiveNegatives, 2015a; Calis, 2016) to hardback books (Evans, 2017; Kugler, 2018). Visually striking and with roots in a much longer historical tradition of 'comics journalism' (Koçak, 2017), these comics have

[1] I am wary of settling *only* on the term 'refugee' here and throughout this article. As Reece Jones reminds us, a focus 'only on the limited, state-defined term refugee renders other categories of migrants, who are moving for economic or environmental reasons, as undeserving of help or sympathy' (2016, pp.22-23). Nevertheless, the figure of the 'refugee' is particularly consequential for considerations of legal and other (human) rights-based geographies. On the one hand, the figure of the refugee is *supposed* to be 'exempt' from immigration controls (El-Enany, 2015, p.8); on the other, the refugee reveals that 'there is no autonomous space in the political order of the nation-state for something like the pure human in itself' (Agamben, 2008, p.91). I therefore centre the term 'refugee' in the discussions that follow, but intend the general counter-geographic impulse underpinning my argument to hold also for migrants fleeing not only political persecution, but economic and environmental violence as well.

attracted attention from scholars across the disciplines, including literary criticism (Smith, 2011), media and journalism studies (Orbán, 2015; Weber and Rall, 2017), human geography (Burrell and Hörschelmann, 2019) and even policy and governance studies (Bake and Zöhrer, 2017). The extent of their reach is impressive, and their celebration by humanities and social science scholars alike is indicative of the form's decolonising potential.

However, critical readings of these comics too often fall back on rather baggy and presumptively 'good' values such as 'empathy' (for example, see Smith, 2011, p.62; Burrell and Hörschelmann, 2019, p. 48). Such an emphasis is not limited to comics about refugees: arguments for the empathetic qualities of the form have been foregrounded by several comics scholars (Fall, 2014; Polak, 2017). But in the case of refugee comics specifically, we should consider some of the pitfalls of this 'empathetic possibility'. As I and others have argued elsewhere (Davies, 2018; Rifkind, 2017, p.649), the empathetic identification between reader and refugee risks eroding cultural difference, thereby either stalling its recognition and acceptance by host populations, or forcing migrants to capitulate to a set of cultural standards that are unthreatening to Western liberalism. An insistence on empathetic identification therefore elides the potentially reparative social and political processes of learning to live *with* strangers, forgoing the opportunity to probe the tensions between hospitality and hostility and – by re-centring Europe as the refugee's presumed final destination – erasing the fact of migrations' geographic 'multi-directionality' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Berg, 2018). Sarah El Sheikh goes so far as to argue that the well-intended impulse to produce a 'humanising' portrait of the displaced leads to an 'idealisation of refugees [that] often strips them of their agency and humanity in a way similar to the demonising rhetoric of anti-refugee movements' (2019, n,pag.). As she continues, the insistence on the innocence of the refugee 'fails to acknowledge the facts that the "saved" and the "saviour" might be equal; that seeking refuge is a right, not a plea; and that standing by refugees is a responsibility, not a favour or act of "charity"' (2019, n.pag.). In our insistence on the empathetic qualities of comics, we are in danger of *de*humanising the refugee all over again.

In this context, Burrell and Hörschelmann's contention that these comics 'be examined as decolonial archives' (2019, p.58), and their reading of Positive Negatives' refugee comics for their advancement of 'a more pluriversal geo-political understanding of what [border] regimes might mean for non-Europeans' (2019, p.60), is especially welcome. Yet their analysis pays limited attention to the *formal* mechanisms that allow comics *specifically* to conceive of such decolonial counter-geographies. This is likely down to the perennial problem of cross-disciplinary conversation, when the kinds of sustained, close critical readings common to humanities disciplines fail to reach – or worse, are seen as irrelevant by – those working

in the social sciences. For example, Burrell and Hörschelmann unfortunately fail to engage with, or even to cite, Hillary Chute's field-defining work, *Disaster Drawn* (2016), in their discussion of comics as a mode of 'witnessing' (p.50).

My point is not to criticise Burrell and Hörschelmann here: the burden is as much on humanities scholars to highlight the benefits of their readings to those in the social sciences, as it is on social science scholars to seek out insights from the humanities. Clearly, our own disciplinary segmentations, and the borders between them, still require further decolonisation, a point to which I return in this article's conclusion. Instead, I raise this issue to highlight the need for cross-disciplinary collaboration and conversation when attending not only to comics, but to refugee narratives as well. For a closer focus on the formal mechanisms of graphic narrative reveals these comics to be less interested in soliciting an empathetic, 'humanising' response from their readers, and to be more concerned with engaging them in the construction of subversive, braided geographies that function – as Burrell and Hörschelmann themselves point out – to decolonise Europe's violent border regime.

Of course, I myself am limited by my own humanities background in critical comics studies and by my training in close literary analysis. I am therefore attempting to build directly on the the work of Burrell, Hörschelman, and others from across the disciplines, by reading specifically – though not exclusively – for the larger social and counter-geographic articulations that are coded into the braided form of the comic. So doing reveals how PositiveNegatives' comics encourage what Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh has described as a focus on 'spaces and places, not faces', a shift in visual emphasis that avoids the potentially dehumanising rhetoric of refugee innocence and offers instead 'a productive alternative mode of "seeing", "feeling", "understanding" and "being with" communities affected by displacement: refugees and hosts alike' (2017, n.pag.).

In making their argument for the decolonising potential of refugee comics, Burrell and Hörschelmann cite Walter Mignolo's work on the 'geo-historical and bio-graphical genealogies' that might be recovered by listening to those 'bodies' otherwise 'disqualified from thinking' (2011, pp.xxii-xxiii). Building on this, I drill down to the specific mechanics of the comics form to ask more precisely *how* comics' representation of refugee *geographies* – the spaces and places that are imagined, felt and remembered in refugee narratives – decolonises the violent borders of Fortress Europe. Of course, Mignolo still has very important things to say here. His conceptual work with Catherine Walsh on the 'pluriversal and interversal paths' that 'advance the undoing of Eurocentrism's totalising claim and frame' (Walsh and Mignolo, 2018, p.2) resonates formally with refugee comics' braiding of multiple social and cultural geographies across and between national

borders. This a crucial relationship that needs to be recognised: the striking affinity between Mignolo's notion of 'border thinking', which strives 'to confront global modernity with global decolonialities' (Mignolo, 2011, pp.89–92), and the bordered and cross-border form of graphic narrative (see Davies, 2019, p.281).

Braiding

I therefore insist on raising the formal properties of comics that will deepen our understanding of their representation of what I am calling here the braided geographies of refugee narratives. Several critics have already explored the comics form from a geographical perspective. Most notably, the geographer Jason Dittmer, along with the contributors to his edited collection, *Comic Book Geographies*, contends that: 'If ever there was visual form well suited to speak to a universe of spaces which are brought into relation with one another, it is that of comic books' (2014, p.15). As Dittmer continues, the spatial composition of comics set multiple images and narrative texts in 'topological' relationships with one another, revealing to readers through the basic building blocks of their form the many complex 'dimensions of the role of geography in social life' (pp.17-18).[2] Elsewhere, Dittmer (2010) has honed in more specifically on the discursive geography and multi-vectored geometry of the comics page. Outlining his 'methodological manifesto on geography, montage and narration', Dittmer makes the case for the ways in which comic book 'visualities' – their form, their communication of narrative through a 'spatial grammar' – might 'open geographers up to uncertainty, tangentiality and contingency by picking apart the linear montage of film [...] and replacing this linearity with the more open comics page and the multiple paths through its frames' (pp.234-235). Another geographer, Giada Peterle, similarly proposes that comics can allow for 'new and unpredicted ways to theorise about maps', presenting themselves as a 'resource to develop "geocritical" and "cartocritical" analyses' (2017, p.44). I have elsewhere argued in turn that comics, rather than revealing only *horizontal* geographies, are able to integrate a topographical or *vertical* dimension into their spatial narratives as well (2019, pp.6-8).

[2] Dittmer's edited collection also raises the issue not of 'space *in* comics', but of 'comics in space' (2014, p. 18) – that is, their circulation, publication and reception along the material networks of printing presses, conventions, exhibition spaces and, perhaps most importantly for refugee comics, the online sphere of the internet. For some critics (Smith, 2011, p.61), the channels through which comics circulate are of critical consequence, and these of course underpin their eventual transmission of refugee narratives. However, here I am more interested in comics' formal construction of 'migrant topographies' (Rifkind, 2017, p.651-652) that might begin to decolonise readers' accepted conception of 'the geopolitical map of Europe' (Tazzioli, 2015, p.4).

This notion of comics as an anti-linear, anti-sequential narrative form capable of radically shifting conventional geographic orientations, aligns productively with the subversive geographical trajectories of refugee narratives. It is refugee comics' *spatial grammar* that allows them to reveal the complex geographical entanglements, cross-national imagined communities, and multi-directional memories and traumas of their refugee protagonists. As I have been arguing, it is by revealing these cross-border imaginaries and realities to us through their spatial form that refugee comics suggest a decolonial rewiring of Europe's nationalist and supra-nationalist geographies and the ever-hardening borders that contain them.

Thierry Groensteen's much cited description of comics as a 'braided' and 'braiding' form can deepen our understanding of this process.[3] As he writes, braiding 'consists of an additional and remarkable structuration that, taking account of the breakdown and the page layout, defines a *series* within a sequential framework' (2007, p.146). It is a term that enables a more thoroughgoing analysis of what Groensteen calls the 'arthrology' of the comics page. In addition to the rather obvious *linear* relations between sequentially organised panels, the term 'braiding' describes the 'potential relations between panels that may be physically and contextually separated', yet which are still connected to one another 'through, for instance, the repetition of iconic content' (Venizia, 2014, p.45). Even for comics that follow a fairly regular gridded pattern, the concept of braiding explains how graphic narrative 'puts *every* panel in a potential, if not actual, relation with every other' (Horstkotte, 2013, p.41, my emphasis). When the panels contained within a single comic are depicting different geographic locations – for example, the immigration centre in Europe and the torture chamber in Syria – the concept of braiding allows us to see the enduring relationships between them. By revealing this braided set of geographic relations, refugee comics visualise a counter-geography that unravels the geopolitical dispensation of bordered nation-states.

In the case of the refugee comics analysed here, the remembered and often traumatic spaces of Syrian torture chambers, invaded homes and street protests are crucial to realising this braided geographic reconfiguration. This highlights this article's second key argument. While comics visualise a kaleidoscopic set of cross-panel and indeed, in the case of refugee comics, *cross-national* geographic relations, these relationships are, to return to Groensteen, both 'synchronic' *and* 'diachronic' (2007, p.147). Braided relationships occur horizontally, within the space of the comics page and between the different geographic spaces it represents, but also *temporally*, as the memories of *past* geographies surface within the geography of their temporal present: this allows them to insist on the relationship between the two. Comics offer not

[3] There are many different critical responses to the question, 'How is meaning conveyed by a sequence of images?', and most are far beyond the scope of this article. For a thorough, succinct and easy-to-access overview of some of the most important of these see Pedri, 2017b.

only ‘spatial’ but also ‘multi-modal narratives’ (Pedri, 2017a), and braiding emphasises the multi-directional movements that occur within them. This quality resonates with Michael Rothberg’s concept of ‘multidirectional memory’, which emphasises how memory is never static or ‘over’, but rather ‘subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing’ (2009, p.3). As Hillary Chute, in her book-length analysis of women’s graphic memoirs, describes, ‘stories to which [...] graphic narrative is today dedicated are often traumatic: the cross-discursive form of comics is apt for expressing that difficult register’ through its ‘layering [of] temporalities and narrative positions’ (2010, pp.2-5) – and here also, I am adding, geographical locations.

Now, in the second half of this article, I analyse each of the three comics included in ‘A Perilous Journey’ to show exactly *how* they work to build these braided, multi-directional relationships between different geographic spaces, both past and present, realising a set of counter-geographic and even decolonising imaginaries in the process.

Mohammad

The first page of Mohammad’s comic (PositiveNegatives, 2015d) is structurally typical of the others included in ‘A Perilous Journey’ (see Fig.1). The comic’s gutters are marked in a reliable, thick black ink, always perpendicular to either the horizontal or vertical margins of the page. Though the panels themselves never settle on a regular spatial rhythm, they too remain cut to fairly reliable variations on simple squares and rectangles. The page in which this grid is contained is itself a large rectangle, optimised for viewing on a laptop screen or a tablet held in the landscape position. The page is therefore wider than it is tall, requiring from readers of comics or indeed, any other books, a subtle but ever so slightly disconcerting spatial adjustment in their negotiation of the page. There are no arrows to guide readers nor clear horizontally demarcated boundaries between rows. So while it quickly becomes clear that, in the case of this page, we are supposed to begin by reading across the top before cycling back to the lefthand margin, there remains a pull upon the reader to divide the page vertically – that is, to read down a lefthand column before moving back to the top of the page and reading down a righthand one. While the comic’s borders are clear enough to prevent us from mistakenly taking this route, the bottom half of the page still draws the reader’s eye and presses itself upon the top half, in this case almost – but not quite – surfacing into the refugee narrative contained in the first seven panels.

Figure 1. The first page of Mohammad's story (PositiveNegatives, 2015d). Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

It is significant, then, that the top half of this page is located in the geographic space of the asylum centre in Europe, while the lower half of the page contains scenes depicting Mohammad's final months in Syria. Here, the Syrian geography – of war, hard labour, and military service – insists upon its emergence within the European landscape, even as the latter is shown as a sanitised space of refugee incarceration. Further disorientating the reader, in this lower half of the page the narrative direction of the comic suddenly shifts from horizontal rows into three short vertical columns. We have to intuit this about turn, perhaps accidentally moving right when we should move down. The different spaces these panels depict begin to collapse in on and overlay one another, as we realise our mistake and change direction.

The counter-geographic coformations here suggested by the form of the comic work to enhance the content of the narrative. In the bottom righthand corner, where the page's narrative comes to an end, two small panels show Mohammad sitting on his bed in the asylum centre in Europe. In the speech bubbles included in these two panels, he comments: 'Then the picture would cut away / And I wouldn't be able to fall asleep, for worry'. He is referring the reader here not to the panel sequentially prior to this one (which is located vertically above it), but rather to the panel horizontally located to its left. In this scene, Mohammad

has been internally displaced, renting a room away from his family home in order to avoid conscription. The 'picture' he is referring to in the speech bubble is that of his Syrian television screen, which shows images of explosions and war. And yet, the picture that does in fact 'cut away', *for the reader* at least, is not this television screen (which is drawn facing away from us), but the comic *itself*, as the first page reaches its conclusion. Mohammad's words thus send readers in two spatial and temporal directions at once – backwards in time, to the war in Syria, and forwards into an unknown, though presumably European, future.

Foregrounding this conflict, it is significant that Mohammad uses the past tense in this panel, as he describes his inability to sleep after his initial displacement *within* Syria. Yet as he speaks, he is located in the *European* asylum centre, sitting on a bed and with a notably distressed expression. The presence of the bed in this panel suggests to readers that, although Mohammad is telling us that he '*wouldn't* be able to fall asleep, for worry' when in Syria, this insomnia persists in the temporal present of the asylum centre in Europe. The textual information here cuts against the visual cue, the two disrupting the spatial and temporal logics of one another. Just as the spatial form of the comic operates recursively, pointing the reader in multiple conflicting directions all at once, the images visualise the cumulative aggregation of different traumatic geographies as they build and congregate not *beyond* the borders of Europe, but instead *within* and *between* them.

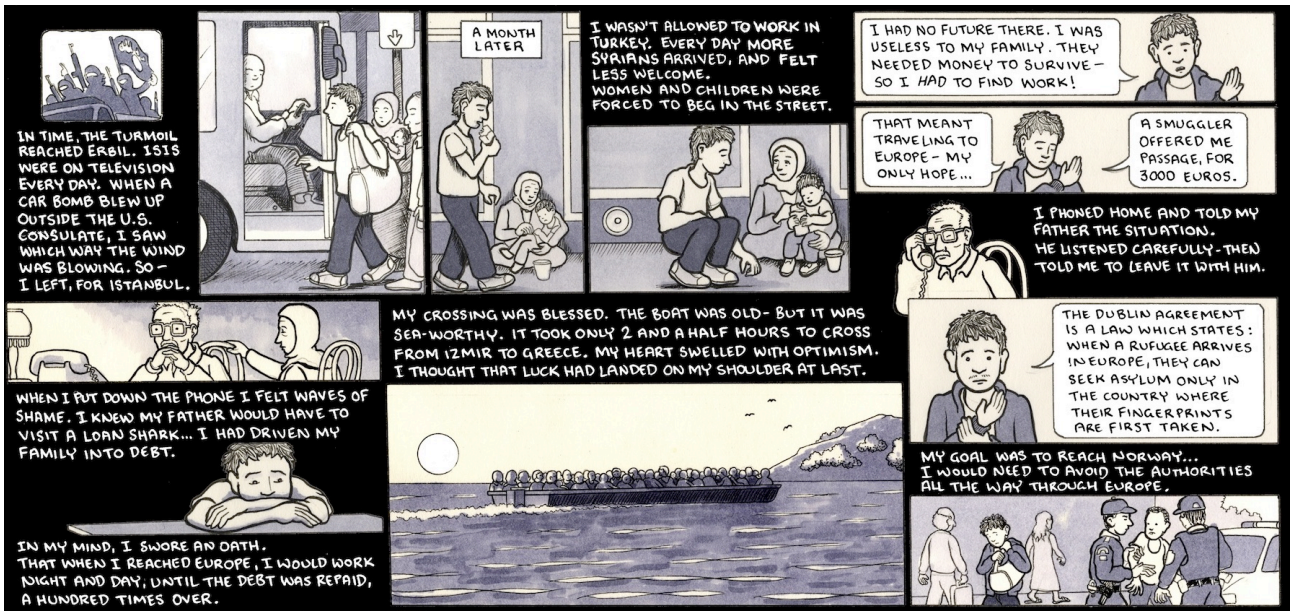

Figure 2. The first two rows of the second page of Mohammad's story (PositiveNegatives, 2015d). Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

The comic's geographic instability does not end here. On the following page, footage of the violence in Syria is again transmitted via a television (though the screen has now been turned to face the reader), while Mohammad struggles to find work in Turkey. Emphasising these multiple geographic coformations – the European viewer, the Syrian war, the refugee in Turkey – the grid of the comic is on this page a little more erratic. Two images break out of conventional panel borders altogether, inserting a further moment of spatial indeterminacy into the comic's narrative structure. That both of these images show Mohammad making a cross-national phone call to his father is of course not a coincidence. The braided form of the comic, which is leading our readerly gaze in a staggered spiral across the page, reveals here the cross-border coformations that are forged between multiple national geographies all at once. The comic is making visible the spatial contours of a subversive counter-geography that cuts across and around the political borders of discrete nation-states.

As Mohammad hangs up the phone, he is overcome with 'waves of shame' because his father will 'have to visit a loan shark' to fund his journey. It is this emotional connection between Mohammad, in Turkey, and his father, in Syria, that now strengthens his resolve to reach Europe: 'In my mind, I swore an oath. That when I reached Europe, I would work night and day, until the debt was repaid, a hundred times over'. While this panel is referring us *back* to Syria through Mohammad's strong emotional binds with his family, the language used – 'waves of shame', 'loan shark' – are pulling us *forward* to the next panel, which shows his crossing of the Aegean Sea by boat. There are three, if not four, geographical spaces at play here, all locked into a kaleidoscopic relationship with one another. The comic's multi-directional movement braids together a complex patchwork of counter-geographic spaces, even as Mohammad, in the next panel, turns to face the reader to explain the Dublin Agreement – the legal framework that attempts to *prevent* the cross-border movement of asylum seekers from Southern to Northern European nation-states.

This complex counter-geography is braided throughout the remainder of the comic, which brings its readers full circle in its final two panels by again showing Mohammad sitting sleepless on his bed in the asylum centre. The comic's first and last panels are almost identical. They both frame a frame – the frame of the door of Mohammad's bedroom. These two images have a direct relationship with one another; if we were to read them side by side, the rest of the comic cut away, they would make narrative sense. The result is to posit the comic as a braided map that highlights the reciprocal interconnections between the multiple geographies that are contained spatially within it. Moreover, these cross-border ties occur both synchronically *and* diachronically; that is, we are asked to read them spatially, across the territories of

bordered nation-states, and also temporally, through the multi-directional recurrence of Mohammad's traumatic memories.

Hasko

Hasko's story, the first in the trilogy (PositiveNegatives, 2015b), builds a similar braided geography through its multi-directional form, though here these operate at different nested scales. The larger counter-geography of cross-border relationships between Europe and Syria is certainly present. For example, in the first large, rectangular panel of the comic's second page, Hasko is shown walking along a European street carrying his shopping (see Fig.3). Moving horizontally, from left to right, the comic then fragments this single panel into four smaller squares, as Hasko recalls his life in Syria. The row then concludes with another large rectangular panel that sits in direct relationship with the first, reproducing its exact shape and size. In this panel, Hasko is again shown walking along a street, further doubling down on the cross-border relationship between the sequence's first and third panels. However, this street is identifiably Syrian, Hasko walking not with a shopping bag this time, but with his hand raised in protest against the regime. The similarities between these two images, with Hasko's different postures echoing one another and inviting their narrative overlaying, emphasise not so much a *sequential* relationship between the two panels, but rather a coterminous counter-geography of cross-national simultaneity.

Figure 3. The first row of the second page of Hasko's story (PositiveNegatives, 2015b). Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

The most striking page of Hasko's story, and indeed perhaps of the trilogy as a whole, sits at the centre of the comic (see Fig.4). This climactic page hones in on the much smaller geographic space of the

Mediterranean crossing between Turkey and Italy. Though not drawing counter-geographic relations between different nation-states, the page captures the disorientating motion of an 'almighty storm' by refusing readers any clear, sequential narrative direction. We begin, as usual, with the first panel in the top lefthand corner. However, the large image of the boat riding the wave of a rough sea immediately draws our eyes diagonally downwards to the centre of the page. Returning to the first panel and searching for a clear narrative direction, we find ourselves presented with two options – do we read horizontally, moving to the panel on the right, or vertically, to the panel below? The panels' content does not immediately answer this question for us. Indeed, the images and text boxes can be read more or less in any order, forging a constellation of multiple relationships around and across the dramatic central image. As readers we are forced, like Hasko himself, to navigate our own route, zigzagging through the multiple cross-panel relationships that are braided across the page.

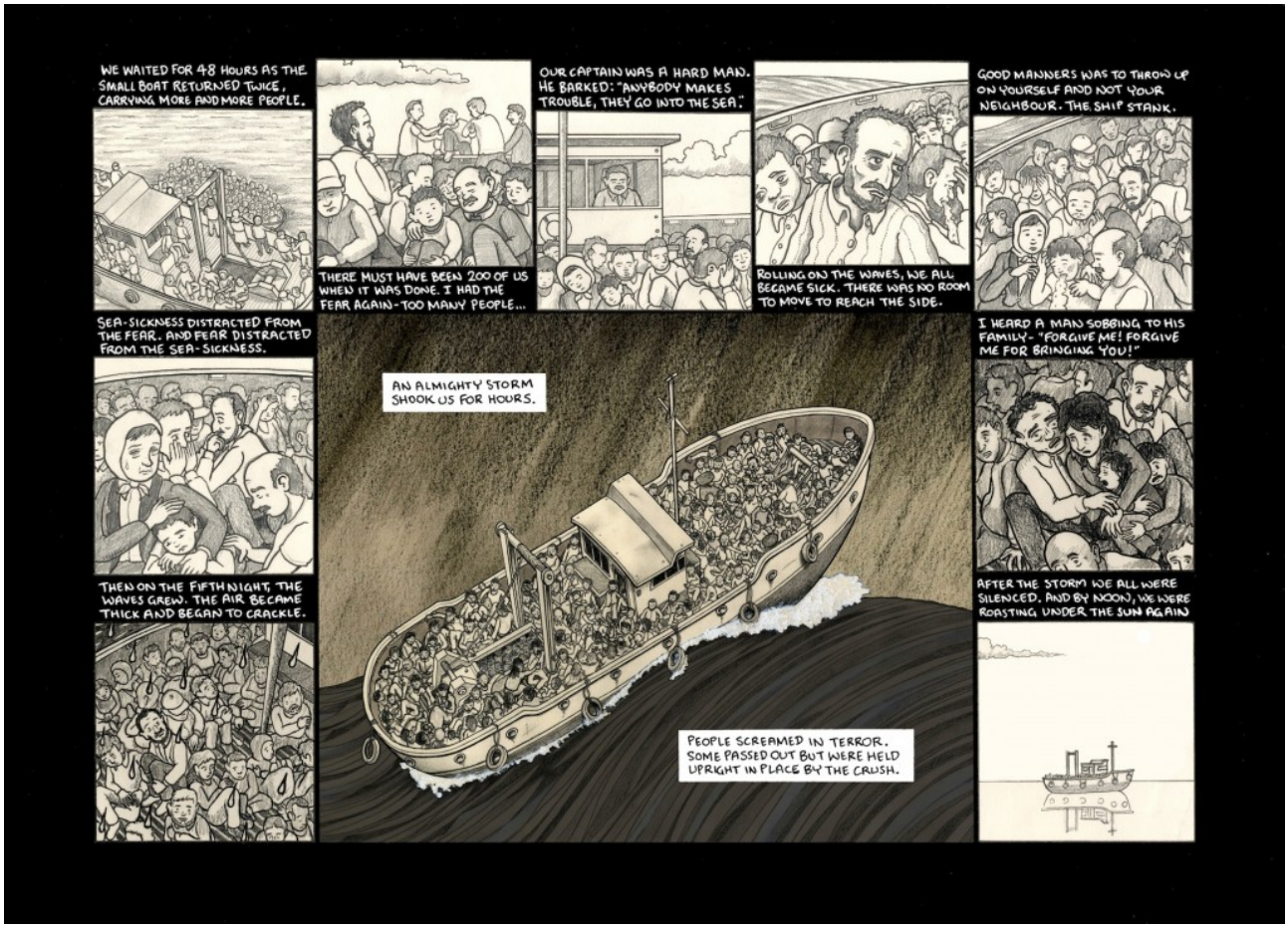

Figure 4. The fourth page of Hasko's story (PositiveNegatives, 2015b). Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

There is a further meta-visual dimension integrated into Hasko's story, one that invites critical reflection on the representational qualities of the comic's spatial narrative. Hasko is himself an artist. As he comments on the comic's second page, in Damascus he 'had a beautiful studio and did so many paintings – nice big canvases, paint splashed all over, a glorious mess!' In this language, Hasko refers readers forwards to the 'splash' page of the storm that disrupts his Mediterranean crossing. This technique, which involves the sudden inclusion of a panel significantly larger than those preceding it, is often used by artists to disrupt the linear sequentiality and narrative rhythm of a comic and to foreground the impact of the content depicted therein. Hasko's reflection on his own artistic practice therefore suggests a metaphoric symbiosis between the splash of his paint and the splash of the wave – a wave that is, after all, here depicted in brown and grey inks. There is even a trace of solidarity between the different comics here, as Mohammad's 'waves of shame' take on sharp visual contours in the climactic image of Hasko's crossing.

Having made it to Europe in the comic's concluding four panel sequence, Hasko has finally secured an apartment and is able to resume his painting. Here, he sets up his easel with a blank canvas while informing readers that it is the negative representation of refugees – that 'refugees are "nothing but a burden..."' – that forced him to undertake his perilous journey. Concluding with this statement, the comic predicts its own entry into a public sphere dominated by aggressive political rhetoric and negative media representations – representations that the comic itself then seeks to challenge. Meanwhile, the comic's last panel shows Hasko raising his brush to paint, the blank canvas coloured in a stark white that jolts it away from the rest of the comic; it is almost a panel in its own right (see Fig.5). Though we never actually see Hasko painting, his preceding comments invite us to assume that he is about to draw something very similar to the comic that we have ourselves just read: an artistic map of nested, counter-geographical relationships that push against the xenophobic fortification of Europe's national and supra-national borders.

Figure 5. The final two panels of Hasko's story (PositiveNegatives, 2015b). Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

Khalid

As in Hasko's story, Khalid's comic also contains a self-referential thread that draws our attention to its underlying themes of cross-border coformations, politicised visual cultures, and braided geographies. The comic's protagonist, Khalid, is not an artist this time, but a photographer and amateur journalist: 'photography was my hobby so I began taking pictures of the protests – and the massacres. I sent my images to the media so the world could see...' (PositiveNegatives, 2015c; see Fig.6). Khalid has taken it upon himself to circulate images of the unrest and violence taking place in Syria to a wider international community, a project in which the comic is also self-referentially engaged. Again, the braiding together of different geographical spaces through the comic's multidirectional form is crucial to the realisation of this 'counter-mapping' project (Tazzioli, 2015, p.3).

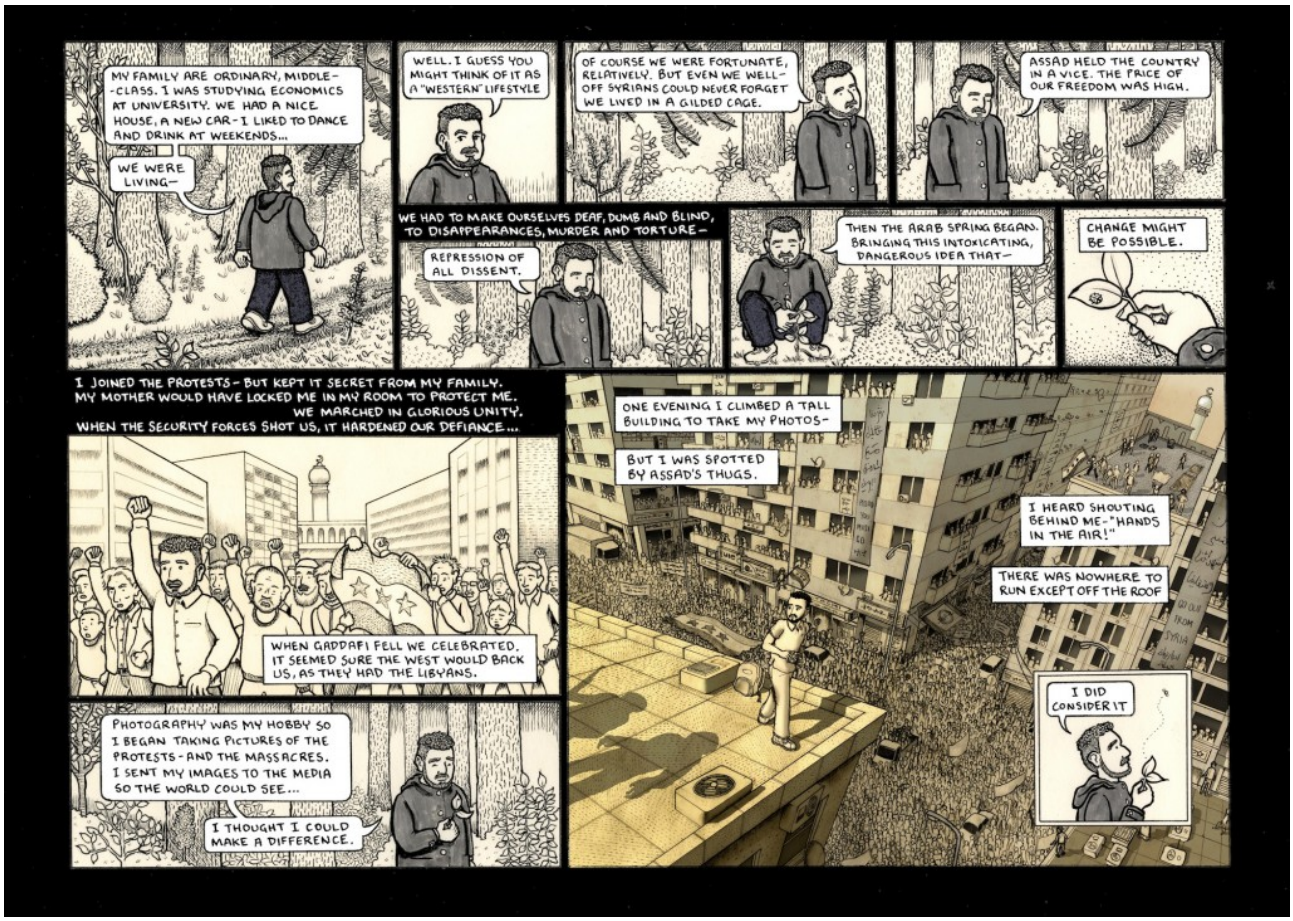

Figure 6. The second page of Khalid's story (PositiveNegatives, 2015c). Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

In the second page of Khalid's story (see Fig.6), the braided relationships between different cross-national spaces are realised through the use of contrasting tones and perspectives. Khalid is first shown walking through the forest that encircles his asylum centre in Europe. This series of panels are lightly shaded, almost black and white, and notably flat and two-dimensional. Following these images, the first panel on the second row shifts to an image of Libyan protestors marching against the Gaddafi regime in Tripoli. Geographically distant from Europe, the slightly darker shading of this image and its depiction of the Libyan street in three-dimensional relief disrupts the regularity of the preceding sequence. The page then returns us briefly to Khalid in Europe before its final climactic panel again jolts us away, more aggressively this time, from any singular national geography. Emphasising the disruptive geography of this composition, this last panel is drawn in yet darker tones that mark it out from the rest of the page. The dramatic perspective, which shifts us up into the air to reveal the vertical depth of the city, similarly places a visual stress on the events depicted in the panel. Showing the traumatic moment of Khalid's arrest by Assad's

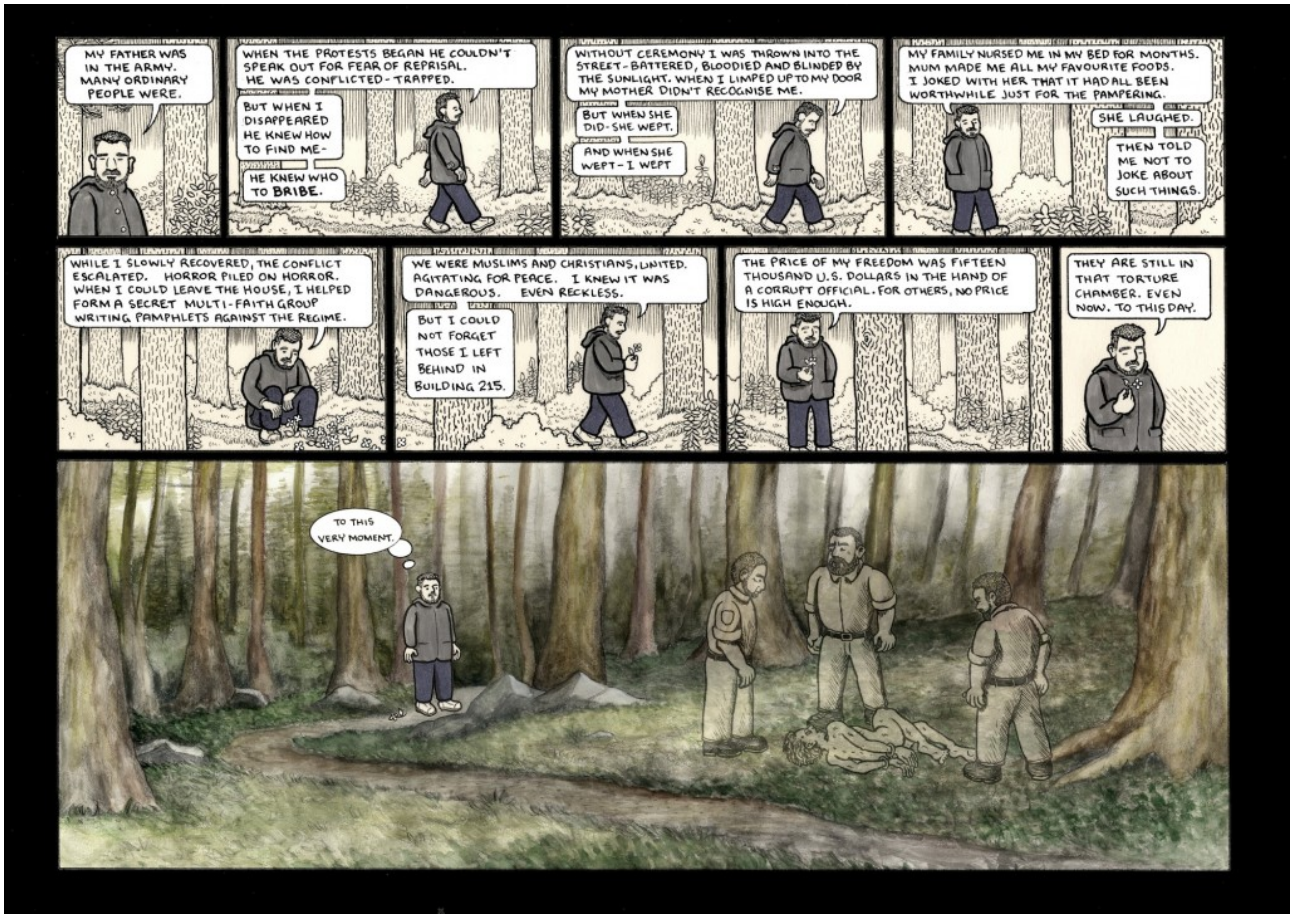

Figure 7. The fourth page of Khalid's story (PositiveNegatives, 2015c). Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

security forces, the layout of the page materialises in its aesthetic the multi-directional qualities of this memory, insisting upon its continued impact in the present.

This geographical bleeding of one space into another is perhaps nowhere more evident than on the fourth page of Khalid's comic (see Fig.7). Ostensibly, this page is one of the few to be set entirely in Europe. The first two rows, which are each comprised of a relatively conventional rhythm of four sequential panels, show Khalid alone, wandering through the forest outside his asylum centre and narrating the circumstances of his release from 'Building 215', a Syrian torture chamber. Though he has now escaped, not only from the torture chamber, but from Syria itself, he remains haunted by those who remain trapped there, still subject to the regime's violence: 'I could not forget those I left behind in Building 215'. As we read this relatively dense textual testimony, which is written in long speech bubbles rather than visualised in parallel images, our eyes are drawn to the large, borderless image that consumes the lower half of the page. This image is especially peculiar because it is painted in soft water colours, an aesthetic quality that differs markedly from the rest of the comic and that is entirely absent from both Mohammad and Hasko's stories. The trees of the forest, which have until now been etched only in black ink, are here drawn in a full autumnal relief of muddy browns and greens. The result is to split the page in two, the upper rows jarring uncomfortably with the large water colour spread beneath it.

The use of water colour is not this image's most unnerving quality, however. As Khalid walks through the forest, he describes how those he left behind 'are still in that torture chamber. Even now. To this day. / To this very moment'. With these last words, which are contained in the page's final, large open panel, Khalid emphasises that it is not simply his traumatic *memories* of the space of the torture chamber that are resurfacing here in Europe. The horrors he describes are *ongoing*, as one temporal and geographic present literally emerges within the space of another. The shadowed images of Assad's security forces standing over a naked, handcuffed naked man literally appear in the European forest. If these images are admittedly ghost-like, and therefore only partially present, it is significant that the two geographic spaces are not here separated even by a panel border. The point is clearly made through the visual form of the comic: for Khalid, the unseen violence driving geographies of displacement are braided together into a synchronic and diachronic spatial tissue, the half-page splash refusing the imagined segmentation of the globe into bordered nation-states.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, PositiveNegatives' refugee comics reveal how communities can be – and are – imagined across, rather than solely within, national borders. Through their spatial form, refugee comics disassemble

geographic space to reveal counter-geographies of multiple synchronic *and* diachronic relations and coformations, as these occur between different regions and locations, and as they accumulate through complex aggregations of traumatic and other affective memories. In this article I have argued that these counter-geographies subvert the geopolitical landscape of discrete nation-states and their territorially bound imagined communities. Most crucially, I have shown how comics visualise these counter-geographies by *braiding* multiple depictions of different geographic spaces and temporal moments into complex spatial constellations of multi-directional relations, rather than simply linear or sequential ones.

Burrell and Hörschelmann, in their reading of PositiveNegatives' 'A Perilous Journey', argue that 'art, aesthetics and visual texts can also help to create new and visible decolonial archives' (2019, p.49). Building on this work, I have sought to show more specifically *how* visual texts such as refugee comics might begin to achieve this admittedly aspirational goal. In throwing the elusive counter-geographical 'turbulence' of refugee movements into momentary relief (Tazzioli, 2014, p.3), these comics might be said to initiate the kinds of 'border thinking' that a decolonial praxis both requires and implies (Mignolo, 2011, p.61). An underlying contention of this article is that we therefore need to combine the critical reading skills of humanities scholars *and* the rigorous anthropological, sociological and theoretical work of social scientists to make sense of the visualisation of these counter-geographic movements in comics. As Caroline Levine has recently argued, literary forms – to which this article also adds the comics form – contain *affordances* that do not operate outside of the social, but are in fact always embedded within and impacting upon it. Following Levine, by excavating from refugee comics the concept of 'braided geographies', I have sought to demonstrate 'a reading practice that follows the affordances of both literary forms and material objects [and] imagines these as mutually shaping potentialities' (Levine, 2015, p.10). This reaching across both disciplinary and national borders shares an overlapping decolonial impulse, one that rejects categories predicated on 'territorial epistemologies' and engages instead in 'epistemological disciplinary disobedience' (2012, p.xvi). Refugee comics, the analysis of which demands exactly these kinds of transgressive cross-disciplinary movements, are one very good place where such work might be developed.

Works Cited

Abderrezak, H. 2016. *Ex-Centric Migrations: Europe and the Maghreb in Mediterranean Cinema, Literature, and Music*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Agamben, G. (2008). 'Beyond Human Rights'. *Social Engineering, 15*, 90-95.

Agier, M. (2016). *Borderlands: Towards an Anthropology of the Cosmopolitan Condition*. (D. Ferbach Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ahmed, S. (2014). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Second Edition.

Aiken, Sharry, and Rudhramoorthy, Cheran. 2019. 'Rwanda and Sri Lanka: A Tale of Two Genocides'. *The Conversation*, 16 May. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/rwanda-and-sri-lanka-a-tale-of-two-genocides-116135.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso.

Bake, J., and Zöhrer, M. (2017). 'Telling the Stories of Others: Claims of Authenticity in Human Rights Reporting and Comics Journalism'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 11*(1), 81-97.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——. (2016). *Strangers at Our Door*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brown, W. (2010). *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. New York: Zone Books.

Burrell, K, and Hörschelmann, K. (2019). 'Perilous Journeys: Visualising the Racialised "Refugee Crisis"'. *Antipode 51*(1), 45-65.

Calis, J. (2016). 'Refugee'. *Drawing the Times*. Retrieved from https://drawingthetimes.com/story/refugee/.

Chute, H. (2010). *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

——. (2016). *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press

Davies, D. (2017, 30 October). 'Hard Infrastructures, Diseased Bodies'. *Refugee Hosts*, *Blog Series: Representations of Displacement*. Retrieved from https://refugeehosts.org/2017/10/30/hard-infrastructures-diseased-bodies/.

——. (2018). '"Welcome to the New World": Visual Culture, Comics and the Crisis of Liberal Multiculturalism'. *Albeit Journal 5*(1), *Listening to Refugees*, n.pag. Retrieved from https://albeitjournal.com/welcome-to-the-new-world/.

——. (2019). *Urban Comics: Infrastructure and the Global City in Contemporary Graphic Narratives*. London & New York: Routledge.

De Genova, N. (2017). 'Introduction: The Borders of "Europe" and the European Question'. In N. De Genova (Ed.), *The Borders of "Europe": Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering* (pp.1-35). Durham and London: Durham University Press.

Dittmer, J. (2010). 'Comic Book Visualities: A Methdological Manifesto on Geography, Montage and Narration'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 35*(2), 222-236.

——. (2014). 'Introduction to Comic Book Geographies'. In J. Dittmer ed., *Comic Book Geographies* (pp. 15-24). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

El-Enany, N. (2015). 'On Pragmatism and Legal Idolatry: Fortress Europe and the Desertion of the Refugee'. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights 22*, 7-38.

El Sheikh, S. (2019). 'Dehumanising Refugees: Between Demonisation and Idealisation'. *Refugee Hosts*, *Blog Series: Representations of Displacement*. Retrieved from https://refugeehosts.org/2017/12/13/dehumanizing-refugees-between-demonization-and-idealization/.

Evans, K. (2017). *Threads: From the Refugee Crisis*. London and New York: Verso.

Fall, J. (2014). 'Put Your Body on the Lines: Autobiographical Comics, Empathy and Plurivocality'. In J. Dittmer (Ed.) *Comic Book Geographies* (pp.91-107). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Fekete, L. (2018). *Europe's Fault Lines: Racism and the Rise of the Right*. London & New York: Verso.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2017). 'Spaces and Places, Not Faces'. *Refugee Hosts*, *Blog Series: Representations of Displacement*. Retrieved from https://refugeehosts.org/representations-of-displacement-series/.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Berg, M. L. (2018). 'Inaugural Editorial: Hospitality and Hostility Towards Migrants: Global Perspectives'. *Migration and Society*, Vol.1, No.1, v-vii.

Gregory, D. (2004). *The Colonial Present: Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Groensteen, T. (2007). *The System of Comics*. (B. Beaty and N. Nguyen Trans.). Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi.

Horstkotte, S. (2013). 'Zooming In and Out: Panels, Frames, Sequences, and the Building of Graphic Storyworlds'. In D. Stein and J. Thon (Eds.), *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative* (pp.27-48). Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

Jones, H., Gunaratnam, Y., Bhattacharyya, G., Davies, W., Dhaliwal, S., Forkert, K., Jackson, E., and Saltus, R. (2017). *Go Home? The Politics of Immigration Controversies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Jones, R. (2016). *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. New York and London: Verso.

King, N. (2016). *No Borders: The Politics of Immigration Control and Resistance*. London: Zed Books.

Kingsley, P. (2017). *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis*.

Koçak, K. (2017). 'Comics Journalism: Towards a Definition'. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies 4*(3), 173-199.

Kugler, Olivier. (2016, February). 'Syrian Refugees on Kos Island'. *Harper's*. Retrieved from http://www.olivierkugler.com/syrian_refugees_on_kos_island/1_kos_large.html.
——. (2018). *Escaping War and Waves*. Oxford. Myriad Editions.
Levine, Caroline. 2015. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.
Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
McCloud, S. (1994). *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
Mickwitz, N. (2016). *Documentary Comics: Graphic Truth-Telling in a Skeptical Age*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Mignolo, W. (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press.
——. (2012). *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Mirzoeff, N. (2011). 'The Right to Look'. *Critical Inquiry 37*, 473-496.
O'Connor, J. 2015. 'Benjamin Dix: "I'm the custodian of some of the darkest stories in the world"'. *The Guardian*, 26 July. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jul/26/benjamin-dix-custodian-darkest-stories-world-un-sri-lanka.
Orbán, K. (2015). 'Mediating Distant Violence: Reports on Non-Photographic Reporting in *The Fixer* and *The Photographer*'. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics 6*(2), 122-137.
Pedri, N. (2017a). 'Photography and the Layering of Perspective in Graphic Memoir', ImageText, Vol.9, No. 2, n.pag. Retrieved from http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v9_2/pedri/.
——. (2017b). 'Mixing Visual Media in Comics'. *ImageText 9*(2), n.pag. Retrieved from http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v9_2/introduction/introduction.shtml.
Peterle, G. (2017). 'Comic Book Cartographies: A Cartocentred Reading of *City of Glass*, the Graphic Novel'. *Cultural Geographies 24*(1), 43-68.
Polak, Kate. (2017). *Ethics in the Gutter: Empathy and Historical Fiction in Comics*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press.
PositiveNegatives. (n.d.). 'About'. Retrieved from https://positivenegatives.org/about/.
——. (n.d.). 'Methodology'. Retrieved from https://positivenegatives.org/about/methodology/.
——. (2015a). 'A Perilous Journey'. Retrieved from http://positivenegatives.org/comics-animations/a-perilous-journey/a-perilous-journey-comics/.
——. (2015b). 'Hasko'. Retrieved from http://positivenegatives.org/comics-animations/a-perilous-journey/a-perilous-journey-comics/comic/.
——. (2015c). 'Khalid'. Retrieved from http://positivenegatives.org/comics-animations/a-perilous-journey/a-perilous-journey-comics/khalid/.
——. (2015d). 'Mohammad'. Retrieved from http://positivenegatives.org/comics-animations/a-perilous-journey/a-perilous-journey-comics/mohammad/.
Rifkind, C. (2017). 'Refugee Comics and Migrant Topographies'. *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies, 32*(3), 648-654.
Rothberg, M. (2009). *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.
Smith, S. (2011). 'Human Rights and Comics: Autobiographical Avatars, Crisis Witnessing, and Transnational Rescue Networks'. In M. Chaney (Ed.), *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels* (pp.61-72). Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
Tazzioli, M. (2015). 'Which Europe? Migrants' Uneven Geographies and Counter-Mapping at the Limits of Representation'. *Movements: Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies 1*(2), 1-20. Retrieved from https://movements-journal.org/issues/02.kaempfe/04.tazzioli--europe-migrants-geographies-counter-mapping-representation.html.
Trilling, D. (2018). *Lights in the Distance: Exile and Refuge at the Borders of Europe*. London: Picador.
Walsh, C., and Mignolo, W. (2018). *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Weber, Wibke, and Rall, Hans-Martin. (2017). 'Authenticity in Comics Journalism: Visual Strategies for Reporting Facts'. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics, 8*(4), 376-397.
Vallet, E. (2014). 'Introduction'. In E. Vallet (Ed.), *Borders, Fences and Walls: State of Insecurity?* (pp.1-7). London and New York: Routledge.
Venizia, T. (2014). '10th April, 1999, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square: Snakes and Ladders, Occult Cartography and Radical Nostalgia'. In J. Dittmer (Ed.), *Comic Book Geographies* (pp.41-58). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.